



## Newsletter

February 2011

### February Meeting:

This meeting will take place in the Stable Bar of the Union Inn on Wednesday 16th February at 7.30pm.

#### **The Greenway Estate & Agatha Christie**

John Risdon will give an illustrated talk on '600 years of the history of the Greenway Estate & its association with Agatha Christie'. First mentioned in 1493, the Greenway Estate on the River Dart in the South Hams had a number of interesting owners, including Agatha Christie, before it was acquired by the National Trust in 1999. The estate is also known for its large riverside gardens which contain plants from the southern hemisphere and for the Barn Gallery which shows work by contemporary local artists. These, and the recently restored house, are open to the public and this talk would be the perfect background for a spring visit.

*Non members of the Society are very welcome to join us for a donation of £2 payable at the door*

### January Meeting:

We last met on 19th January in the Union Inn, and the 2011 programme began with an entertaining and informative talk by our President, Ian Mercer, in which he related 'The President's Tale' – a personal contact with Dartmoor'. It began on a student visit to Holne Moor and has been maintained since through both his work in conservation and his residence in Moreton for nearly forty years

He told a number of amusing anecdotes that gave insights into how his career progressed from running Slapton Ley Field Studies Centre to his appointment as the first Head of Dartmoor National Park. There had been some disappointments, notably the routing of part of the Okehampton By-Pass through the National Park, but these had to be set against satisfying successes such as the 'management agreements' with upland farmers. Not only did these help to preserve the pattern of small fields and their walls, but also enabled tenancies to be handed on through the families that had farmed them for generations. Lady Sayer, the formidable leader of the Dartmoor Preservation Society, had terrified Ministers such as Harold Macmillan while the Duchy of Cornwall had deserved its accolade as the 'ultimate benevolent landlord'. Finally, we were treated to an evocative set of slides from Professor Mercer's recent book 'Dartmoor', published by Collins, that illustrated his beloved 'wild and rugged landscape' in all its various guises.

It was good to see so many members present to hear Ian's talk which he said would be his last as President. We do hope, however, that he can be persuaded to return to the subject of Dartmoor again in the future.

### A Day to Research Your House's History

Members are invited to attend lectures and a workshop at the Devon Rural Archive, Shilstone, Modbury, PL21 0TW on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2011 10 – 3.30pm.

We hope you may be interested in attending this day to help you research the history, significance and development of your house whether it is in the countryside, a market town, the outskirts of a city or a village in Devon. Our specialist guest speakers will deliver short talks in the morning and then in the afternoon session we can make use of our spacious archive room to further individual research using the knowledge on hand.

Please bring any photographs, documents or references which might help with this and, if you like, a laptop as our building has WiFi.

We need to take bookings for this event and if you want to provide house name, postcode or grid references of the property you are researching, we can do some preliminary map work.

The cost is **£15** per person, in advance, with cheques made payable to **The Fenwick Charitable Trust** and sent to Diana Gower at the **Devon Rural Archive, Shilstone, Modbury, PL21 0TW**

**Editors note:** If any member is interested in attending this workshop do please contact our Chairman Bill Hardiman on 440083. Bill is going to the workshop and would be willing to car share, and provide further details.

### [Moreton History Society Archives](#)

At long last we have found a permanent home for our archives. Next autumn they will be stored in the old primary school and made available at specified times to members and visitors. Of course, this will not be possible without a team of volunteers to set it up and run it. But we are also hoping to be able to secure funding to help staff and equip the project for the first few years. As you are probably aware, the school is currently being renovated by the Moreton Development Trust for community use. MHS are supporting their bid for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to make part of it an arts and heritage centre that will include the archive store as well as a permanent and a mobile exhibition of Moreton's history. In the centre of the ground floor, a gallery will enable individuals and societies, including MHS, to mount temporary exhibitions throughout the year. If successful, the bid will pay for an employee who will lead the team of volunteers after they have all been trained and advised by a professional archivist. Finally, it will also finance the printing of booklets, such as a revised Town Trail. We will know by around Eastertide if the Heritage Lottery fund bid has been successful. If not, we will look at other possible sources of finance, we will at least be able to store them properly and provide some relief for Ian Mercer's ceilings! **Bill Hardiman**

### [Accidental Death:](#)

From the Exeter Flying post dated 26th June 1828.

*'On Thursday last, a fatal accident occurred at Moretonhampstead. As a boy of the name of Nicholas Holman was driving a cart near the town, the horse took fright - the boy in endeavouring to, as it is supposed, to impede the progress of the horse, fell, and the wheel of the cart passed over his back; from the injury he received he soon expired. Coroners verdict—accidental death, and a deodand of 1s on the wheel of the cart.'*

A little more on this next month.

### [Record Sales:](#)

I'm sure members will be delighted to hear that Ian Mortimer's book 'The Time Travellers Guide to Medieval Britain' was the best selling non-fiction paperback for 2010.

He easily outsold Andrew Marr's 'The making of modern Britain', which came second –well done Ian!

### [March Meeting:](#)

The March meeting will take place in the Stable Bar of the Union Inn on Wednesday 16th March at 7.30pm

#### **Thomas Hardy: Wessex Man**

An illustrated talk by **Brian Spittles**, a Moreton resident, who was Head of Humanities at Ruskin College, Oxford.

Thomas Hardy's novels are still highly popular; several of them have been adapted for the television and cinema screens, including possibly the two most controversial novels of the Victorian period. He wrote very strong women characters who partly reflect his own experience with powerful females. The novels also express Hardy's own fascination with history.

*Non members of the Society are very welcome to join us for a donation of £2 payable at the door*

**Chris Pilkington**